

# **Inaugural Speech**

## **Steven Tilley, Speaker of the House**

Thank you, and welcome....I am addressing you today as the Speaker of the Missouri House because your confidence, trust, and support made it possible and for that I will always be grateful.

However the reason I stand here is because of the love and sacrifice of some very special people, and I would like to take this opportunity to introduce them.

Although I may be the Leader of this House, there is one undisputed Speaker in my own house, and that is my wife, Kellie Tilley.

I am sure serving as Speaker will undoubtedly be one of the most significant achievements of my life, but the greatest honor and achievement I will ever have is being the father of my two beautiful daughters, Kourtney and Korrin.

My parents taught me at a young age the importance of hard work, integrity, kindness and compassion. They have always been my biggest fans and believed in me when I found it hardest to believe in myself. Please welcome my parents Everett and Bonnie Tilley and Linda and Dave Wooff.

And last, but certainly not least, my role model, my best friend, and my older brother, Jason and his wife Maureen.

I would like to start by sharing a story with you that only my family members know. As an 18 year old college freshman I was a pretty immature...perhaps some of you can relate. I was more focused on "extracurricular activities" than I was academics and my grades reflected this. My Mom once pointed out, "to say my academic achievement was less than stellar would be a historic understatement"

However as time passed, and with the help of my wife, I matured and realized that if I wanted to amount to anything and fulfill my potential, I had to get serious about school. So I did, and in my last three years I excelled academically. In October of 1993 I applied to optometry school. It was very competitive to get into a professional school because only 1 spot is granted for about every 10 applicants.

Although I had done quite well in my classes the last three years, my lack of focus early on brought my grade point average to less than impressive. But I always believed in my heart that if I could just get an interview, if I could explain how much I matured, how hard I could work, and how much I learned they would give a chance and allow me to become an asset to the profession.

However, November and December passed and no interview. January and February passed still no interview. As March approached as the last month for interviews, I sat down with my father and he suggested I go visit a respected optometrist just south of us. This doctor was a person who has been recognized as a leader in the profession of optometry for a generation.

I called this distinguished optometrist and he agreed to meet with me, so I drove to Caruthersville to ask for his help. After hearing my story he agreed to make a call on my behalf and to make a long story short I got an interview. The University of MO St. Louis accepted me and the rest is history. Without being accepted to Optometry

school, I probably wouldn't have become a Doctor. I probably wouldn't have found my way into the Missouri House of Representatives, and certainly wouldn't be standing before you as Speaker.

That man was Doctor Terry Swinger, we all know him as one of our colleagues here in the House, Representative Swinger.

As I reflect on my past, with the exception of my family members, Representative Swinger is the individual who has had the most profound positive impact on my life, and I want to stand here today and from the bottom of my heart, thank him.

The reason I wanted to share that story with you is because we can all learn a valuable lesson from Representative Swinger. When I was a young man that needed help, a young man that needed someone to believe in me. He didn't look at me as a Republican or a Democrat, especially not the future Speaker; he looked at me as a person.

As we embark on this legislative session, let's not look at one another as Republicans or Democrats, but rather as normal dedicated citizens working to make this state a better place to live, work, and raise a family.

We're not always going to agree – even with our own parties. But we must agree to not let partisanship get in the way of good ideas.

Within this story there is also a challenge, and it is a challenge I am placing before all of you. Dr. Swinger took a chance on a young man because maybe he was a local kid, or maybe because he believed I could become an asset to the profession, but he definitely set an example as a role model that I have not forgotten.

And in return, I hope as a young man I was able to set an example as well...that it is alright to believe in people, that we can still have faith in one another...and always hope for the best.

So, my challenge is this, that we all, in our entrusted positions -lead by example.

As Republicans we now control the largest majorities in the nearly 200 year history of our state. Because of that, it is my belief we now have the greatest responsibility in leading by example.

From the book of Luke, "When someone has been given much, much will be required in return; and when someone has been entrusted with much, even more will be required."

Missourians have entrusted us with the power of state government. And Missourians have been clear, they want...need...and deserve a change in the culture of how we operate.

Missourians want legislative leaders who live by the same rules they do.

So as your Speaker, I have a great deal of responsibility and therefore the largest role in leading by example.

However, we don't always have to lead by legislating. As elected officials our goal shouldn't always be to create more laws, but institute better principles, a change of attitude, and a willingness to challenge the status quo.

As your Speaker-elect, I believe you have seen firsthand my willingness to challenge the status quo. To accept the way things have always been done as the way they should always be done is unacceptable. My first change, for the first time ever, as an incoming Speaker was naming our intended Chairman more than a month in advance. We

followed that by assigning committees to all members, both Republican and Democrat before session started. The reason was, so that before this gavel fell each of you could be focused on your issues and getting down to business for the people of Missouri.

Second, I took a historic step in naming 3 Democrats as chairmen to substantive committees. I believe in the fundamental principle that a chairman should not be chosen because of the party under which they run, but rather the quality by which they possess.

Missouri families face difficult times. Unemployment hovers over 9% and many of these families have been forced to tighten their belts. We will also have to make more cuts this year and so we in the Missouri Legislature must lead by example.

Together, with Minority Leader Talbot, our combined leadership teams have identified savings of more than 10% and in my own office 15%. I applaud our Republicans as well as the Democrats in working together for that step in the right direction. This year we will prove to the citizens of our state that government can and will tighten their belts to do more with less.

Another example of challenging the status quo will come very soon we will be approving the House Rules under which we operate. Within this set of Rules you will see several distinct changes. One of which, removes partisan control of committees and reinstitutes the power of the minority leader to appoint his chosen members to committee. The expansion of special committees was done under Republican control, it limited the minorities power and we are going to fix it.

In addition, working with Budget Chairman Silvey and the Appropriations Chairs we will move to require cost containment plans from every state government department. Departments must realize we want to work together on improving efficiency not simply hear requests for more dollars. Further, I am ready to grant subpoena power to the budget committee to root out more waste, fraud, and abuse.

These are just some small changes, but they show Missourians we are willing to lead by example and committed to getting beyond the business as usual mentality and challenge the status quo.

However, it will take more than this to get our state on the right track.

As a citizen I am convinced government should NOT be the SOLUTION to every problem....but as legislators we should try everything in our power to make sure government is NOT the PROBLEM either.

Today, I would like to lay out a plan called the Show Me Solutions Initiative.

The principles of this plan are built on the principles which Missourians expect us to govern - Limited Government, Fiscal Prudence, Individual Freedom, and Personal Responsibility, but it is also grounded in common sense. These are also ideas that are not entirely new, but with a change in focus are completely achievable because when many of us talk with everyday Missourians their call has often been – Show Me Solutions.

There are 5 key component areas I see as vital to our progress.

The first is a pledge to the voters that we heard them loud and clear. We will force government to live within its means, balance the state budget, and hold the line on taxes, period.

Second, our top priority must be job creation. But first let me be clear. Government does not create jobs. Entrepreneurs, small business owners, and large employers do. Government's role is not to run the economy, but to facilitate a business climate where the entrepreneurial spirit can thrive.

To create a better economic environment for all job creators, businesses must have a piece of mind that they will not be hampered with new regulations, fees, taxes, or frivolous lawsuits. If we achieve that THEY can create new jobs. Therefore, our plan calls for a moratorium on any new regulations, fees, or new taxes for small businesses. However, we also want to take a significant step in reducing and limiting unfair lawsuits that threaten the viability of good honest businesses – and that includes Missouri's family farms.

Third, bring more accountability to government. For instance, if someone wants a Missouri driver's license I think they should pass it in our official language – and that is English. And as law enforcement personnel conduct a citizenship verification, why don't we cross reference those individuals with the sexual predator list. Finally, we have to acknowledge that human trafficking occurs in our state and that in the worst cases it involves the sexual trafficking of children let's send a clear message to these worst of the worst that Missouri will not tolerate it and that no punishment is too severe.

In Missouri, I believe we can also reach for greater accountability from the federal government. So, we will work on a federal repeal resolution to band with other states and reject out-of-touch, out-of-control, and policies outside their authority.

Fourth, I believe in the fundamental principle that every child deserves a world class education. And it shouldn't matter if you are a Caucasian student in Perryville MO or an African American child in St. Louis or a Hispanic child in Kansas City. I have asked my education chairman to not focus on what's best for administrators, to not focus on what's best for teachers unions, but to focus on what is best for our children's education. Therefore, we need to pass teacher tenure reform that will reward good teachers and provide greater local control to school districts. We also need to strongly consider adopting policies to address social promotion. We are doing our children an injustice by merely passing them along if they can't meet the minimum standards.

Fifth, use responsibility and free market concepts to expand and increase quality healthcare. Missourians are compassionate people and willing to give a hand-up, but that is different than a handout. Missourians are interested in helping someone out of a bad situation, but Missourians have no interest in funding a bad habit.

That is why we need to pass drug testing on welfare recipients.

In Congress they believe the first 100 days are essential to establishing progress. However, in the Show Me State I believe our standards should be higher, and so, my last challenge as well as yours is that we shoot for success in our first 50 days. So, that in the first 50 days of this session the House will have passed 75% of its priorities.

Finally, in closing I want you to take this into consideration. There are roughly 6 million people in Missouri and only 163 get the honor and privilege to serve in the House of Representatives. We all have a unique but fleeting opportunity to make a difference in the lives of our citizens.

A few months back my Dad told me not to waste this opportunity. He told me I had a choice. As speaker I could hop in the boat, float downstream, not make any waves, and let the river of history take me through the path of least resistance. Then, at the end of the ride just look back and be glad I was speaker.

Or, I could hop out of the boat, make a few waves and charter a new course. I'm choosing to chart a new course, and challenge each of you to chart that new course with me.

May god bless all of you, may god bless your families and may god bless the great state of Missouri

Steven Tilley